

Once flowing, the sentences go wall to wall,  
My father carpeting the entire page —  
No margins — perfectly tacking down the message.  
(Both workmanlike and eco-amicable.)  
Lately, the print has grown larger. My father's eyes  
Are weakening, and he has ballooned the size  
Of his edifying words to make them legible.

Chilling. Little by little everything goes.  
I try to put this out of mind, but then  
I can't — not quite.... My father's retired ten  
Years now. He putters, paints, refinishes  
Furniture. Works in the garden. Takes drives.  
Watches TV. Walks. Cuts grass. Rakes leaves.  
Shovels away the snow. So his letters disclose.

What are letters really? Communication?  
Yes. Transfers of fact? Also. But more —  
They are things we make for one another.  
Stamped objects. Friendly fabrication.  
We keep them. They are the houses of our thought.  
These are the letters that my father built  
From everyday facts and the heart's creation.

## SILVER

The card table is what first comes to mind.  
It was set up in the corner next to the bookcase.  
The surface, bowed a little, was scuffed and lined.  
A small door leading into the storage space  
Had been cut out of the pale sideboard wall.  
If one leaned back on the card table chair  
A little too far, one tapped the knob. I recall  
As well a Webster's in disrepair.  
Its spine was held together with masking tape.  
One of the foldings in the A's was loose.  
The thumb index that descended step by step  
Down the edge had been scraped goldless.  
The lamp on the table had a green shade  
And a brass stand. Click! A September night  
Twenty-five years ago. Each word weighed,  
I composed my first poems under its light.

— Michael Fessler

Kawasaki Japan